VISITOR GUIDE

MUNGO National Park

Looking out across the dry lakebed of Mungo from "The Walls of China", Mungo National Park.

NSW
NATIONAL
PARKS AND
WILDLIFE
SERVICE

Mungo National Park

Mungo National Park covers most of an ancient dry lakebed on the plains of western NSW. During the ice ages, Lake Mungo was one of a chain of freshwater lakes strung along Willandra Creek, then the main channel of the Lachlan River flowing into the Murrumbidgee River. These dry lakebeds preserve the longest continual record of Aboriginal life in Australia, dating over 60000 years ago to the present day.

PARK FACILITIES

A **visitor centre** is located near the entrance to the park. This provides a range of information about the park and its natural and cultural heritage. Payment of Day Use & Camping Fees made here.

Bunk accommodation is available at the shearers' quarters adjacent to the visitor centre. There are three rooms with four beds and two rooms with six beds.

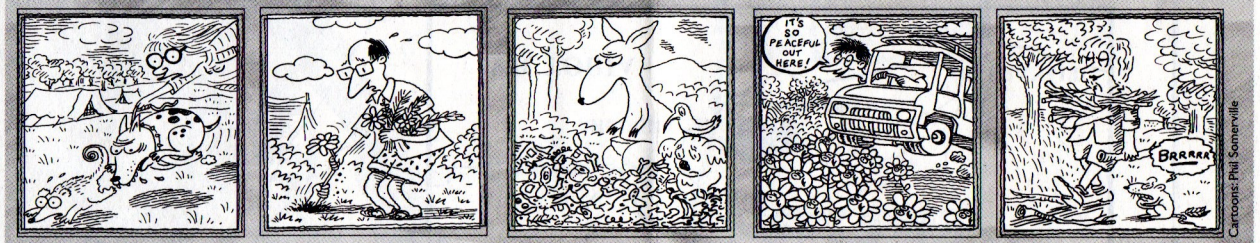
Bookings (in advance) are made through the Lower Darling Area Office (ph 03 50218900).

Basic **camping facilities** including pit toilets, tables and fireplaces are provided in the Main Camp (near the Arumpo Road park entrance) and at Belah Camp along the Drive Tour. No wood fires are allowed at Belah Camp. Booking is not required for camping.

The **Grassland Nature Trail** offers a pleasant 1 km walk from the main camping area. The 2.5 km **Foreshore Walk** commences near the visitor centre and a 0.5 km walk through the mallee begins at the mallee stop along the Drive Tour.

Ranger guided *Discovery* tours are held during school holidays only. Please contact the Lower Darling Area office for details and fee schedules.

Please help to protect Mungo National Park



Leave your pets at home as they are not permitted in NPWS areas.

All flora and fauna are protected. No firearms.

Use rubbish bins where provided or else take your rubbish out with you when you leave.

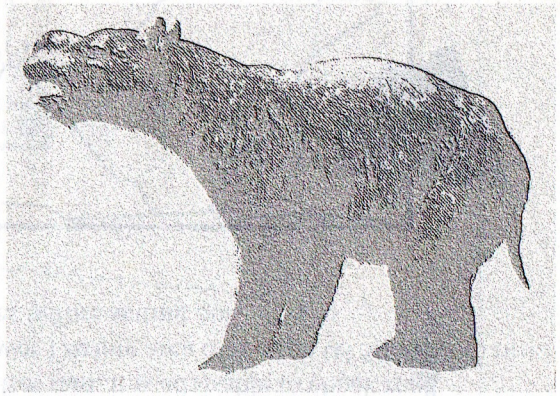
Keep to formed roads. Vehicle tracks remain visible for many years.

Do not collect any wood in the park. Preferably carry gas cooking appliances No chainsaws.

DRIVE TOUR

A 70km signposted vehicular track takes you on a round trip across the lake floor to the Walls of China, over the dune to the mallee country and then around the north-eastern shore of the lake. Facilities located along the way are shown on the map overleaf. The highlight of this trip is the Walls where you can walk back in time through the layers of a dune and stroll to the top of the drifting sands for a view across the lake floor. A visit at sunset or sunrise is especially evocative.

Remember that all Aboriginal artefacts are protected by law. Do not pick up or remove any that you may see.



50 000 years ago visitors to Lake Mungo would have been able to see the buffalo sized Zygomaturus grazing around the water's edge.

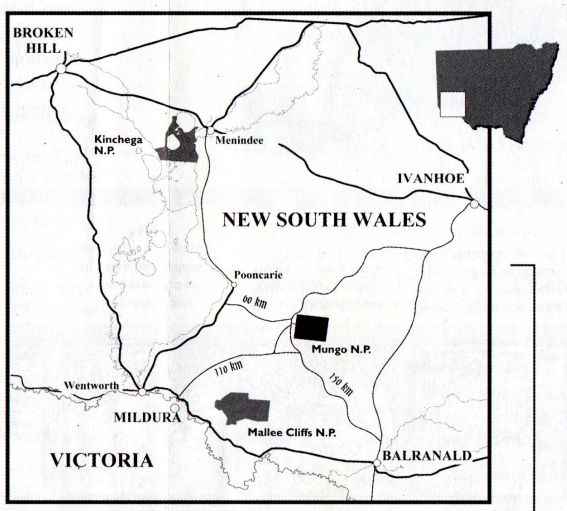
Mungo National Park

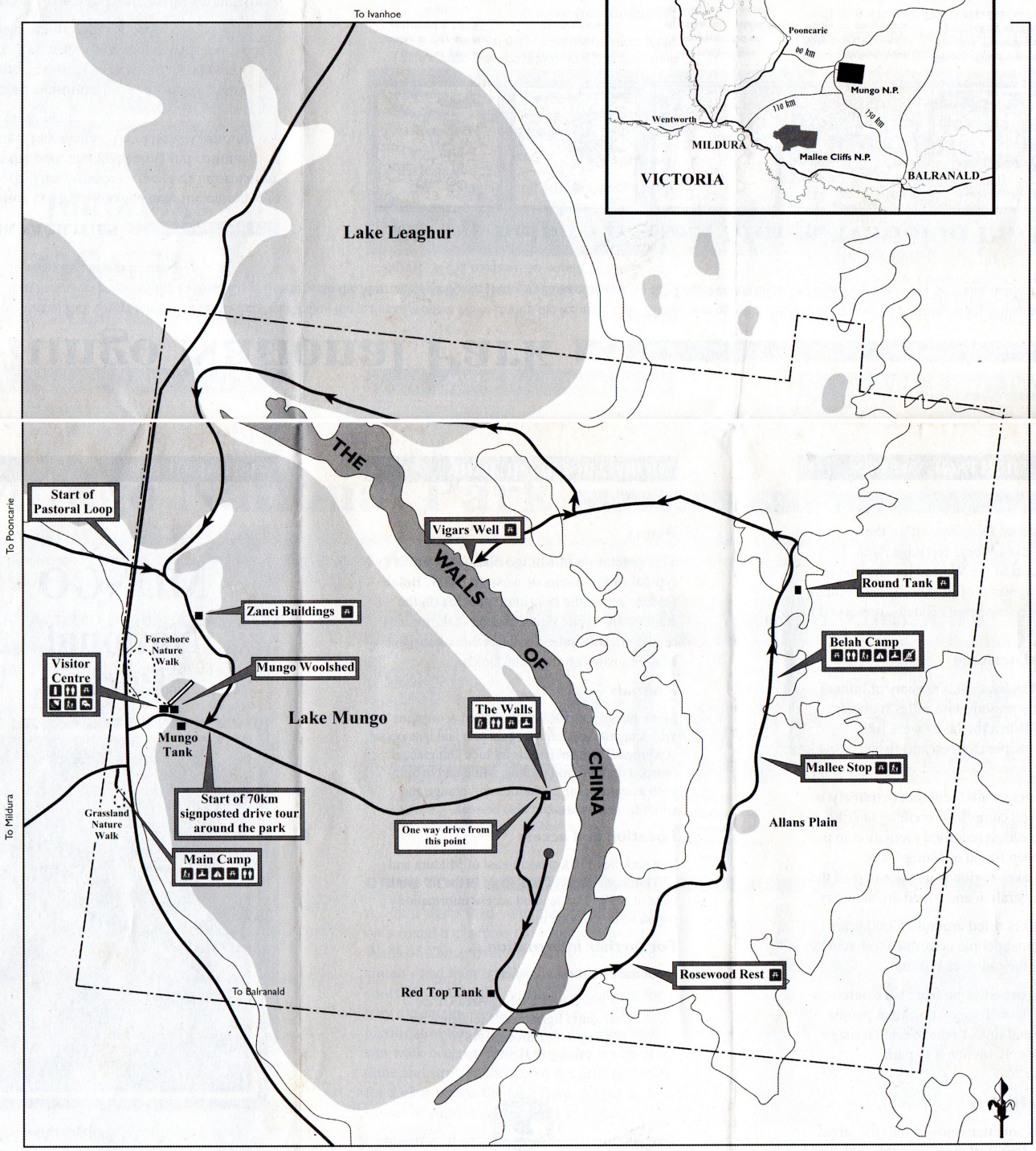
REMEMBER

When travelling in and around Mungo National Park, there is always the possibility of becoming stranded. Please follow the following safety guidelines and have a safe and enjoyable visit.

- Inform someone of your itinerary before setting out.
- Carry extra food, FUEL, vehicle spares and WATER.
- Outback NSW can be very hot in summer. If travelling at this time be well prepared for the conditions.
- In the event of a breakdown, remain with your vehicle.

The park lies 110 km north-east of Mildura and 150 km north-west of Balranald on the Arumpo–Ivanhoe Road. As all roads in and around the park can become impassable after rain, it is advisable to check road conditions with the NPWS Lower Darling area office (ph 03 50218900) or local tourist information centres before setting out.





Road
Walking track
Park boundary
Contour line

Dry lake bed
The Walls of China

Picnic area
Water
Toilets
Lookout

Walking track
Camping Area
Accommodation
Information

5 kilometres

WORLD HERITAGE VALUES

Mungo National Park lies within the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area. This site was added to the World Heritage list in 1981 in recognition of its Aboriginal heritage and the evidence of past climates preserved in its landscapes.

Aboriginal heritage

Evidence of at least 60,000 years of human occupation is present within the Willandra Lakes area. When the lakes were full, Aboriginal people camped and fished along the shores.

The lunette (or 'walls') contain extremely well preserved campfires, cooking hearths and burials. The oldest recorded cremation in the world has been found at Mungo. The Willandra Lakes region is a major part of the jigsaw of Australian and world archaeology.

When the lakes dried around 15 000 years ago, Aboriginal people continued to live near soaks along the old river channel.

They also quarried stone from rock outcrops on the lake floor. Today Aboriginal people with traditional links to the World Heritage Area are actively involved in park management.

European History

In the 1850s squatters moved into the area and old Gol Gol station was established. The Mungo woolshed (open for public inspection) was built around 1869 from local cypress pine and is an important part of the region's pastoral history.

MORE ABOUT THE PARK

Plants

The vegetation of Mungo National Park is typical of the plains of western NSW. Belah (casuarina) is the dominant species on the sand plains while black bluebush dominates on the slightly saline soils of the lakebed. Mallee grows on the dune fields.

Animals

Many native animals, including red & western grey kangaroos, echidnas, dunnarts and bats occur at Mungo. Resident lizards include shinglebacks, bearded dragons and geckos, while native birds such as emus, pink cockatoos and orange and white fronted chats, can also be seen.

Location and access

The park lies 110 km north-east of Mildura and 150 km north-west of Balranald in the far south west of NSW. For detailed access information please refer to inside map.

For further information ...

about the park please contact:

NPWS Lower Darling Area Office
Cnr. Sturt Highway & Melaleuca St.
PO Box 318, Buronga, NSW 2739
Phone: (03) 5021 8900

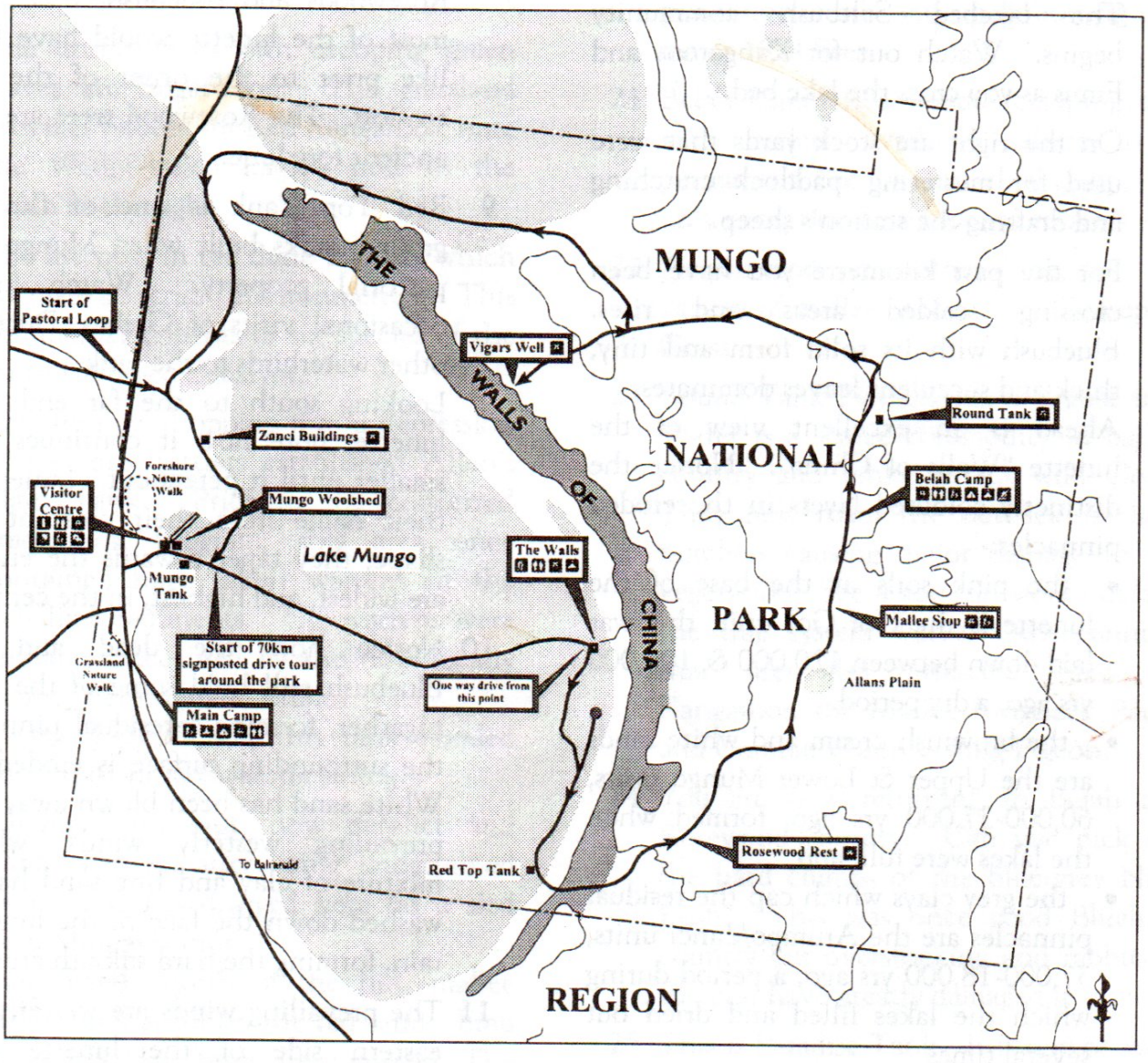
NSW NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
43 Bridge St
Hurstville 2220
Ph: 1300 36 1967
Fax: 02 9585 6555
www.npws.nsw.gov.au
TW 02/00
Printed on recycled paper

Route notes for the self-guided drive tour

Driving the Mungo Story

MUNGO NATIONAL PARK

Part of the Willandra Lakes Region World Heritage Area



Map Reference:

Turlee sheet 7530

1:100,000 Orthophotomap

NSW NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Route notes for the self-guided drive tour - 1

Stop Accompanying Notes

1 The Mungo Woolshed was constructed in 1869 of locally hand cut Cypress Pine, a termite resistant timber. Note the unique drop-log wall construction. Spend some time and take the walk through the Woolshed.

2 On the left are the remains of a rabbit proof fence built around 1930 at the height of the rabbit plague.

3 The lakebed Saltbush community begins. Watch out for Kangaroos and Emus as you cross the lake bed.

4 On the right are stock yards that were used for mustering, paddock crutching and drafting the station's sheep.

5 For the past kilometre you have been crossing scalded areas and rises. Bluebush with its solid form and tiny, thick and succulent leaves dominates.
Ahead is an excellent view of the lunette "Walls of China". Notice the distinctly coloured layers in the eroded pinnacles:-

- the pink soils at the base of the lunette is the Gol Gol unit, this was laid down between 120,000 & 100,000 yrs ago, a dry period.
- the brownish cream and white sands are the Upper & Lower Mungo units, 60,000-37,000 yrs ago, formed when the lakes were full, and
- the grey clays which cap the residual pinnacles are the Arumpo/Zanci units, 37,000-18,000 yrs ago, a period during which the lakes filled and dried out several times.

Within the latter two units extensive evidence of Aboriginal occupation can be found.
Beyond the main lunette are the white dune crests which have formed over the period since the lakes finally dried some 15,000 yrs ago.

6 You are on alluvial fans, formed from the eroding lunette. The rounded bright green bushes you can see on the dunes are Sandhill Wattles.

7 In the depression to the left of the road, before the lake finally dried, a lagoon would have formed in times of low water.

8 Looking towards the lunette, there is an uneroded section covered with Rosewoods and Bluebush, this is what most of the lunette would have looked like prior to the onset of the major erosion. The Rosewood trees are on an ancient foredune.

9 Red Top Tank is one of the many ground tanks built when Mungo was a pastorial property. Watch for the occasional visits of Grebes, Ducks and other waterbirds to the tank.
Looking south to the far end of the lunette, note how it continues to get smaller until it peters out. Lunettes get their name from their crescent moon shape, they taper towards the ends and are widest, and highest, in the centre.

10 Notice how the dead and dying Bluebush still hold some of the surface togather, forming a residual pinnacle as the surrounding surface is eroded away. White sand has been blown away by the prevailing westerly winds, while a mixture of clay and fine sand has been washed down the face of the lunette by rain, forming the hard smooth crust.

11 The prevailing winds are westerly. The eastern side of the lunette is the deposition zone for wind borne sediments. These mobile sand dunes are moving East up to 3m per year.

Route notes for the self-guided drive tour - 2

12 Where two different plant communities or land systems meet is called an ecotone. In this area, not only do the lunette and Belah/Rosewood plant communities converge, so do the animals that they support, making it a good spot to observe the wildlife that utilise this ecotone.

13 A nice spot for a picnic among the Rosewood trees. Across the road is a dense stand of Belah.

14 The untidy trees with drooping green leaves are Sugarwood. The grassland provides habitat for Red Kangaroos, note the Wedge-tailed Eagle's nest in the Belah to the right.

15 You are now in red dune country which is mallee scrub environment. This community consists of six species of the multi-stemmed Eucalypt.

16 You are now dropping into a depression where early settlers established Allen's Plain Tank. Prior to the concerted eradication program, this area once contained huge rabbit warrens in the rich lime sediments. The warrens were probably once used by the now locally extinct Bettongs and Bilbies.
In the 1956 floods, this tank flooded enough to allow for water skiing!

17 Allen's Plain Hut, now derelict and tumbled down after being undermined by rabbits, was dragged here on a sled from Mungo station.
Immediately north of the hut, mallee scrub starts again on the red sand. Emu Bush and Hop Bush are common. The Rosewood is heavily infested with mistletoe, watch for honeyeaters and mistletoe birds.

18 Mallee Stop, the first true mallee dunes on the track with tussocks of Porcupine grass forming the understorey. Enjoy a quiet sit or take the **500 metre nature walk** to get a better feel of this fabulous habitat. A good place to spot lizards!

19 This is the old boundary fence-line between Mungo and Zanci stations.

20 The Southwest Mallee Bushfire Scheme Fire Trail. Part of the network of fire protection trails set up following the major 1974 fires.

21 Belah Camp is a remote camping area with toilets available, there is a permanent fire ban in this camp, the only exception being for gas cookers.

22 As you cross yet another dune, note the variety of mallee species and Porcupine Grass.

23 Round Tank Picnic Area and goat trap. Water is a scarce commodity in mallee country and tanks attract wild Goats. They now roam the outback in large numbers causing major damage to the vegetation. See if you can work out how the trap system works. Other animals that are also attracted here are Kangaroos, the Mallee Ringneck Parrot and Common Bronze-wing Pigeon.

24 You are now returning to Belah and Rosewood country. Can you pick out the hard clumps of the blue-grey Nitre Bush? This was once good Bluebush country but overstocking and rabbits in the past have greatly damaged it.

25 This is Paradise Tank. It is one of many examples of artificial watering points in the park, a legacy of past pastoral activities. These provide a haven for large numbers of kangaroos and feral animals.

* Take the side road (left) to Vigars Well, 100m further on.

Route notes for the self-guided drive tour - 3

26 Vigars Well used to be a watering hole for coaches and drays. Still visible are the old wagon and dray tracks that cross the lunette. Climb the tall dunes for fantastic views.

27 The road is now following the ridge that divides Mungo from Leaghur.

28 Have a look at the interpretive map. This interlake area is rich in archaeological artefacts. This would have been a major link between the lakes for the people who lived in this area as long as 60,000 yrs ago!

29 The road rises gently up the Bluebush covered slopes onto the lunette, which here, forms a number of ridges.

30 This is the channel which connected Leaghur with Mungo. It was excavated early this century to form Willandra Tank. This inter-connecting channel was Mungo's only link to Willandra Creek. Water flowed into and out of Mungo via this channel, but only after the water level in Leaghur rose or fell.

31 Crossing the Mungo lunette, here a low rise. Driving straight ahead, note that the western shore of Lake Mungo is made up of a red dune not white.

32 You have run quickly out onto the lake floor covered with Bluebush. The lake floor is a rich producer of this bush and native grasses which pastoralists utilised extensively for sheep fodder.

33 The road is beginning to rise out of the lake through Spear Grass and Bluebush. If there are clouds, notice the pink tinge on them which is a reflection from the red soil. When the clouds are over the white dunes, they refect pale grey and when over vegetation, greenish.

34 The road now traverses an ancient sand spit which almost divided the lake. Cypress Pines grow well on this lighter red soil.

35 This is Zanci Tank. The low fenced areas on the right are trial exclusion plots for the rehabilitation of Cypress Pines.

36 The old Zanci Homestead site is now a day use area. This is where the owners built a dugout to avoid the searing heat of summer to protect both themselves and their provisions. With all the local timber used in the buildings and yards, you can begin to understand how the surrounding woodlands were impacted by these developments late last century.
One of the few termite-resistant woods, Cypress Pine was a much desired timber for the building industry. In 1922 the Mungo Wool Room was demolished and the timber from it then used in the building of Zanci's Woolshed.

37 Staying left, you once again are onto the Mungo lake bed.

38 Back at the Mungo Woolshed. Perhaps it is time to have another walk around the display in the Visitor Centre to see it again with fresh eyes after experiencing Mungo's many facets first hand.

39 Continue up the bitumen road to the intersection and turn left. 150m on the left, past the Main Camp turnoff is the Mungo Lookout.
This magnificent view is the best way to end the tour and to appreciate the sheer size of the lake and maybe get a feel for how it might have looked when it was full of water all those years ago.....

For further information, refer to the Mungo Guide Book, available from:

Lower arling Area Office
NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service
PO Box 318
Buronga 2739
(03) 50218900